

OUR SOCIAL CHAT

All letters intended for this department should be addressed to "Aunt Jennie," care of The Progressive Farmer, Raleigh, N. C.

AUNT JENNIE'S LETTER.

Another Story of Pioneer Days in North Carolina and Tennessee.

This is the third and last of the three historical sketches I promised you. They have been drawn from those graphic ones by Langdon Knight in the Delineator for May, June and July.

If you could visit the southern portion of Northampton County, N. C., you would find the remains of an old log cabin on a hill-top, which cabin was the birth-place of James Robertson. His father, Pioneer Robertson, was the most noted man in the county. Near them, over this hill westward, lived their nearest neighbor, George Reeves. Both men had large families and our story concerns two of these children—pretty Charlotte Reeves and James Robertson.

It seems that they were sweethearts always, as we hear of them first when he was seven and she somewhat younger. No one was astonished when it became known that Charlotte would celebrate her eighteenth birthday by marrying her erstwhile lover, James Robertson. The old people did more for them than most pioneer parents were able to do, for they had accumulated property. But the young folks then were very much like those of the present, and they began to long for new scenes, consequently they emigrated and settled some miles from the home of Capt. Jack Sevier, near Nashville, Tenn. They were frugal and industrious, and in a few years became the wealthiest people of that part of the country. And why Robertson, who had risen to be a captain and a magistrate, should have wished to move further westward is a mystery, but go he did, and with him a considerable number of their neighbors.

Their voyage on the Holston River in flat boats was one of the most remarkable in history. In the archives of the Historical Society of Tennessee you can see the diary of Capt. Donalson, who commanded the expedition, and his thrilling accounts of shipwrecks, battles with the Indians, defeats, victories, and escapes; and through it all the bravery of Charlotte Robertson, whose timidity had been transformed into heroism. At one time when the party were attacked from both sides of the Tennessee River simultaneously, she placed her four babies in the bottom of the boat and built a barricade of boxes, pillows, etc., around them, and amid the whistling bullets and arrows, calmly loaded the guns for the men on board. At another time we see her taking the place of a wounded boatman, and pushing ahead was met by a canoe filled with painted warriors. This she upset with a stroke of her paddle, and as the red faces appeared above the water, they were forced back beneath it by strokes

from her oar until they were compelled to swim for the shore.

Three months of such a life tries the souls of men, and to womankind it is hardship indeed, but it was not over, for they had only reached the Ohio River and—despairing of ever arriving at their destination—they turned their boats down stream. Capt. Donalson had deserted them, thus leaving but three men on board. "Mrs. Johnston, a sister of Capt. Robertson, acted as pilot, and Mistress Charlotte and her maid Hagar, worked at the oars with the men." The weather was very severe and their provisions gave out, but the woods were full of Indians, consequently they could procure no game. They kept in the middle of the stream, living on short rations of parched corn. Their days were miserable and the nights filled with horror, always under the shadow of death, but unconquered and unconquerable. More than four months after they embarked the prow of the "Adventure" grounded at a spot now marked by the foot of Market Street, Nashville, Tenn., and the trying voyage was over.

Capt. Robertson had reached the spot several weeks before and had a rude house ready for their reception. How delighted Mistress Charlotte must have been to realize that this was home and she could rest under her husband's protecting care. The house had no shutters for windows or door, but paper soaked in lard let the light in and a sheet was hung over the door at night. The wide fire-place afforded light for reading favorite books at night and their discussions of these, begun when they married, was resumed, but oftentimes interrupted. He being the referee and general helper of the settlement, was compelled to neglect his own affairs and had often-times to hunt for game at night for the sustenance of his family.

One night while he was away on one of these expeditions, Mistress Charlotte had an adventure which again demonstrated her wonderful nerve. She had put the children to bed early and then sought rest for her own tired body. Ever on the alert, she heard a slight noise at the sheet-covered door and on looking saw a pair of bright eyes peering intently at her. The sheet was pushed aside and a large panther came stealthily into the room and bounded on her bed, peering intently at her with half-closed eyes. He seemed satisfied that she was dead, or at least harmless, for not a muscle quivered. He left her and examined the sleeping children, but finally left them unharmed, turning to a gourd filled with lard of which he devoured the contents.

When left alone at night after that experience she always placed her rifle within easy reach, and when Capt. Robinson returned he found her seated before the fire, rifle in hand, ready to vanquish any enemy or foe. For panthers were not her worst foes, since the red men had determined to exterminate the white men,

and they respected neither age nor sex. Two of Mrs. Robertson's little sons were killed within a stone's throw of the fort in one year, and she viewed their mangled little bodies but never lost her courage; in fact, her conduct was an inspiration to all the settlers, as she bade the men go forth and cultivate their crops while she and her sisters guarded the fort.

Later, the Indians discovering what to them seemed the defenseless condition of the fort, attacked it, but were forced by the guns in women's hands to retreat. Twenty-five of them, however, concealed themselves under the walls of the fort. Try as the women would, a shot could not be made to harm them, and the defenders were in desperate straits, for they saw that the Indians were going to fire the fort unless they were driven out. It was wash day and many pots were filled with hot water. Suddenly Capt. Robertson's sister thought of this, and mounting the wall amid a shower of bullets with a scalding bucketful of water, she called to the women for more until the burning shower caused the red men to leave in disgust. "Thrice was she severely wounded, but held her position" until they were routed. When the men returned they found the battle over, several of the women injured, fifteen dead Indians and many more wounded—and all because of one woman's dauntless courage in the face of danger.

Next week we shall tell the rest of the story of Charlotte Robertson.

Our letters this week are good, but there are not so many of them as we ought to have. Let us have more.

AUNT JENNIE.

Food Preservatives are Injurious.

Dear Aunt Jennie:—It may interest the readers of Social Chat to know that after elaborate investigations extending over a period of months, the Bureau of Chemistry of the Department of Agriculture announces that it has decided that the use of preservatives, such as sulphuric and boracic acid, in foods, is injurious to the health of consumers. The general public had already reached this conclusion through the more direct road of common sense, but it is reassuring to have its opinion fortified by the dictum of science. The Bureau will now devote attention to the methods of preservation through the medium of cold storage or sterilization. Many fruits, meats, etc., are now kept in this way for years, and it is thought that the food deteriorates after a certain time, no matter what means are adopted to preserve it, even if it does not develop ptomaines or other dangerous qualities. As in the previous experiments, the preserved foods will be fed to volunteers from the Departments. An amusing incident occurred recently in connection with the "poison squad," as these volunteers are called. A report was published that the use of certain chemicals in food produced beautified pink cheeks. The Bureau has since received thousands of letters from women all over the world, begging for the recipe.

Washington, D. C.

W. H. T.

Young Man, Beware of Drink; Young Woman, Beware of Drinkers.

Dear Aunt Jennie:—It seems that I must let go my work a few moments this lovely morning and drop in on the members of Social Chat. I know we all dread "morning callers," but please excuse me this once.

There have been so many good letters of late, with not a dull one even for a change. Maybe mine will be appreciated for this purpose. There have been some especially good things, as I say, but I loaned my papers, and so haven't them at hand this morning, and I do not remember the names of all the writers upon these special subjects.

One question I remember that has been discussed to some extent is that of young ladies associating with young men of questionable habits, such as drinking, smoking cigarettes, etc.

Now, friends, please excuse me, for I reckon I am a "crank" on the subject of drinking anyway. But it is not because I have ever been afflicted by drink in any way myself. My father is, and always has been, a sober man. Not one of my five brothers (so far as my knowledge goes) ever tastes the vile stuff, and though I have been married eight years, I have never detected the odor of liquor of any kind on the breath of my husband; so you see my protests are not the bitter cries of despair.

But when I see so many, who were lovely and accomplished girls only ten or fifteen years ago, who are now the miserable wives of wretched drunkards, my heart yearns for those dear young girls who are now "keeping company" with young men who drink, thinking that by so doing they can "reform" them! Girls, beware! lest some bitter day, in the not distant future, when you arise in the morning (after a night of weeping) with pale cheeks and swollen eyes you hear from the very lips that now compliment your beauty in the very nicest terms, the crushing words: "What's the use of your making a fool of yourself now? You knew I drank when you married me!"

Young lady, those very identical words have been heard by heart-broken wives, who were once as fair and happy as you are now!

Then there are so many bright boys and young men who are ruining themselves and destroying their usefulness by tampering with drink. Oh, the pity of it! They say they have a right to do as they please, and they turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of mothers, sisters and all others, because they "have a right to do as they please." Have they?

Here is a bright young man. He has two good strong hands, and two perfect eyes. He is a model of physical perfection. But he gets to wondering how a blind man ever gets on. The thought grows on him till finally he says: "Well, my eyes are my own; I can do with them as I please, and it's nobody else's business." So he jabs a knife into his eyes and puts them out! Then he has heard of some great man who has lost both hands and he wants to know how a man feels without any hands, so he goes and gets some crazy surgeon to cut off his hands.

Now did he have any right to make a wreck of his body in that way? He might have been a great and useful man, but what is he now? If he did not owe his powers for usefulness to society, then society owes nothing to him in his state of helplessness.

We are all bound by our duty to our fellow creatures to make the most of our opportunities for usefulness.

Young man, beware of drink.

JEMIMA RINGGOLD.
Cumberland Co., N. C.